

# SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

## APPENDIX V – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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FOR THE

**SLIGO**

**DESTINATION EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**for:**

**Fáilte Ireland**

88-95 Amiens Street  
Dublin 1



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

**by:**

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# Section 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

This is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Report for SEA Environmental Report for the Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the Plan' or 'DEDP'). The purpose of the Environmental Report is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan. The Environmental Report has been prepared as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process that is being undertaken by CAAS Ltd. on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

## What is an SEA?

SEA is a systematic process of predicting and evaluating the likely environmental effects of implementing a proposed plan, or other strategic action, in order to ensure that these effects are appropriately addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making on a par with economic, social and other considerations.

## Why is it needed?

The SEA is being carried out in order to comply with the provisions of the Planning and Development (SEA) Regulations, as amended, and in order to contribute towards sustainable development and environmental protection and management. The output of the process is an Environmental Report that should be read in conjunction with the Plan.

## How does it work?

All of the main environmental issues in the area were assembled and considered by the team who prepared the Plan. This helped them to devise a Plan that contributes towards the protection and management of environmental sensitivities. It also helped to identify wherever potential conflicts between the Plan and the environment exist and enabled these conflicts to be mitigated.

The SEA was scoped in consultation with designated environmental authorities.

## What is included in the Environmental Report that accompanies the Plan?

The Environmental Report contains the following information:

- A description of the environment and the key environmental issues;
- A description and assessment of alternatives for the Plan;
- An assessment of the provisions of the Plan; and,
- Mitigation measures, which will avoid/reduce the environmental effects of implementing the Plan and will contribute towards compliance with important environmental protection legislation.

## Difficulties Encountered during the SEA process

No significant difficulties were encountered in undertaking the assessment.

## What happens at the end of the process?

An SEA Statement is prepared which summarises, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan.

## Section 2 The Plan

### 2.1 Overview

The Sligo DEDP represents a five year plan aligned with a ten year vision that will transform tourism in the North West and how visitors will engage with the northern region of the Wild Atlantic Way. The destination development approach mapped out within the Sligo DEDP will have a significant influence on regional visitor dispersion and the future importance of Sligo as an attractor for the North West region.

Achieving the goals of the Wild Atlantic Way regional tourism development approach requires many elements combining together. The transformation of Sligo as an international tourism destination will fulfil a dual purpose. It will grow the value of tourism for the county and become the stimulus for how visitors will engage with the North West. It will connect with the activity of other DEDPs such as North Mayo, Inishowen, Upper Shannon, Shannon Erne and Borders. The approach will leverage its geographic advantage as the closest Wild Atlantic Way destination from the Dublin market.

The Plan's **Vision** is: *"A year round adventure filled destination where the quality of the outdoor experience has put Sligo on the international stage. Spectacular coastal walks, long distance trails and greenways combined with epic off road biking experiences deliver anew blend of adventure and wellbeing experiences. It is recognised globally as a world class surfing destination where dabblers and enthusiasts share the waves with international surfers. Sligo town has developed into one of the country's in demand visitor destinations. The vibrant urban hotspot is brought alive by the animation of its innovative placemaking investment, festivals, events and cultural experiences. The appeal of Sligo among international and domestic visitors has been central to the transformation of the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way. The quality of the Sligo destination experience has disrupted regional visitor flows linking the destination with other regions and cross border opportunities. Sligo has an always on destination vibe that has changed the mix of visitors, attracted by year round events, new attractions and ease of access to connected communities."*

The Sligo DEDP represents an overarching destination development framework linking existing and new projects with new opportunities for consideration. It builds on the ambition of the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy (RTDS) and will be key to growing the value of tourism in the northern half of the region. This requires a collective stakeholder approach integrating all elements of the visitor experience to develop Sligo as a distinctive visitor destination.

The overarching objective is to ensure Sligo is a great place to live and great place to visit. This requires a focus on the products and experiences with the capacity to grow the value of tourism for local communities and ensure the economic benefits will be dispersed across the county. The destination and experience development approach places a priority emphasis on sustainability and climate action, highlighting the interdependency between all agencies and stakeholders to work together towards a shared vision for sustainable tourism in Sligo .

The key objectives of the Sligo DEDP are:

- Ensure the Sligo visitor experience is brought to life through the development of a mix of tourism products and experiences that will attract visitors and retain them for longer.
- Unlock the economic potential of tourism in Sligo by progressing a range of key initiatives that will disperse tourists across the wider destination.
- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development by enhancing and creating strong destination experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.
- Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year round basis to Sligo and immerse themselves actively in the community while providing the opportunity to interact with local people as part of the Sligo experience.
- Develop the role of Sligo as a key enabler for regional tourism development and transform how visitors engage with the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Implementing the Plan will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. The Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships. These include projects relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance<sup>1</sup> with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "Site Maintenance Guidelines" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others" (and any subsequent replacements).

The Plan is supported by Appendices relating to implementation plan and environmental considerations.

## **2.2 Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes**

The Sligo DEDP is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for, among other things, land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These other existing policies, plans etc. have been subject to their own environmental assessment processes, as relevant, and form the decision-making and consent-granting framework.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets out Ireland's planning policy direction up to 2040. The NPF is to be implemented through Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) and lower-tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans. The RSESs set out various objectives relating tourism development and activities that have been subject to environmental assessment. The RSESs have informed, and continue to inform, the preparation of lower-tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans, which also set out various objectives relating tourism development and activities that have been subject to environmental assessment.

Implementation of the Sligo DEDP shall be consistent with and conform with the NPF, RSES and lower-tier land use plans, including provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents including through SEA and AA processes. In order to be realised, projects included in the Sligo DEDP (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Sligo DEDP is not part and does not contribute towards.

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<sup>1</sup> Demonstration of compliance may be supported by monitoring undertaken by the beneficiary.  
CAAS for Fáilte Ireland

## Section 3 The Environmental Baseline

### 3.1 Introduction

The summary of the environmental baseline of the Plan area is described in this section. This baseline together with the Strategic Environmental Objectives, which are identified in Section 3.11, is used in order to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan and in order to determine appropriate monitoring measures.

The scope of the assessment (including description of baseline, the relationship to other plans and programmes and the evaluation of effects) has considered the environment of both Ireland and Northern Ireland, where relevant.

### 3.2 Likely Evolution of the Environment in the Absence of the Plan

The likely evolution of the environment in the absence of a plan would resemble the environmental effects that are described for Alternative 1 (Business as Usual).

### 3.3 Biodiversity and Flora and Fauna

Key ecological sensitivities across the area to which the Plan relates include those relating to:

- **Rare species and habitats** protected in the designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) located within the area to which the Plan relates;
- **Aquatic and riverine ecology** associated with the various streams, rivers and estuaries, such as the Rivers Drumcliff, Garavogue and Owenmore;
- **Peatlands** associated mainly with upland and coastal locations;
- **Coastal areas and marine waters and associated aquatic ecology** downstream of the area to which the Plan relates; and
- **Locally important habitats** within the area to which the Plan relates, including various woodlands, parks, gardens, hedgerows, old buildings/stone walls and lands used for agriculture within and surrounding the Plan area, providing habitats for flora and fauna and facilitating linkages and corridors to the surrounding countryside for the wildlife.

**Land cover** types for the Sligo DEDP area is shown on Figure 3.2.

European sites occur along the waterways, marine and coastal areas and within and downstream of the area to which the Plan relates. These European sites comprise:

- Special Areas of Conservation<sup>2</sup> (SACs); and
- Special Protection Areas<sup>3</sup> (SPAs).

The SEA uses the same zone of influence cited in the Appropriate Assessment (AA); a 15 km buffer around the area to which the Plan relates. European sites designated within and within 15 km buffer of the area to which the Plan relates are mapped on Figure 3.1. For more detail on European sites refer to the SEA Environmental Report and AA document that accompanies the Plan.

Other ecological designations occur within and adjacent to the Plan area and these are detailed in the main SEA Environmental Report.

#### Existing Fáilte Ireland Environmental Monitoring

<sup>2</sup> SACs have been selected for protection under the European Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) due to their conservation value for habitats and species of importance in the European Union. The Habitats Directive seeks to establish Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the EU. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SACs to protect habitats and species, which, together with the SPAs designated under the 1979 Birds Directive, form Natura 2000. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)(Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010.

<sup>3</sup> SPAs have been selected for protection under the 1979 European Council Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) - referred to as the Birds Directive - due to their conservation value for birds of importance in the EU.

Fáilte Ireland regularly engages with environmental research that is used to make informed management decisions and produce robust guidelines to facilitate the protection of the environment. From its inception in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Operational Programme Monitoring Programme (undertaken to date by CAAS on behalf of Fáilte Ireland guided by relevant stakeholders) has been conducting research into the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment. On site observational surveys and ecological assessments have covered 57 locations and monitored the activities and effects of over 26,000 visitors. From the monitoring work it was seen that 75% of all visitor observations resulted in no identifiable effects; which highlights the feasibility of 'no impact tourism' being an achievable target.

### 3.4 Population and Human Health

In the 2022 Census, the total population of the area to which the Plan relates (i.e. County Sligo) was identified as being of 70,198 persons, an increase in total population by c. 7% (c. 4,663 persons) since the previous census. Population has the potential to interact with various environmental components. Potential interactions include:

- Recreational and development pressure on habitats and landscapes;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for wastewater treatment at the municipal level;
- Contribution towards increase in demand for water supply and associated potential impact of water abstraction;
- Potential interactions in flood-sensitive areas; and
- Potential effects on water quality.

Human health has the potential to be impacted upon by environmental vectors (i.e. environmental components such as air, water or soil through which contaminants or pollutants, which have the potential to cause harm, can be transported so that they come into contact with human beings). Hazards or nuisances to human health can arise as a result of exposure to these vectors arising from incompatible adjacent land uses for example. These factors have been considered with regard to the description of: the baseline of each environmental component; and the identification and evaluation of the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Plan.

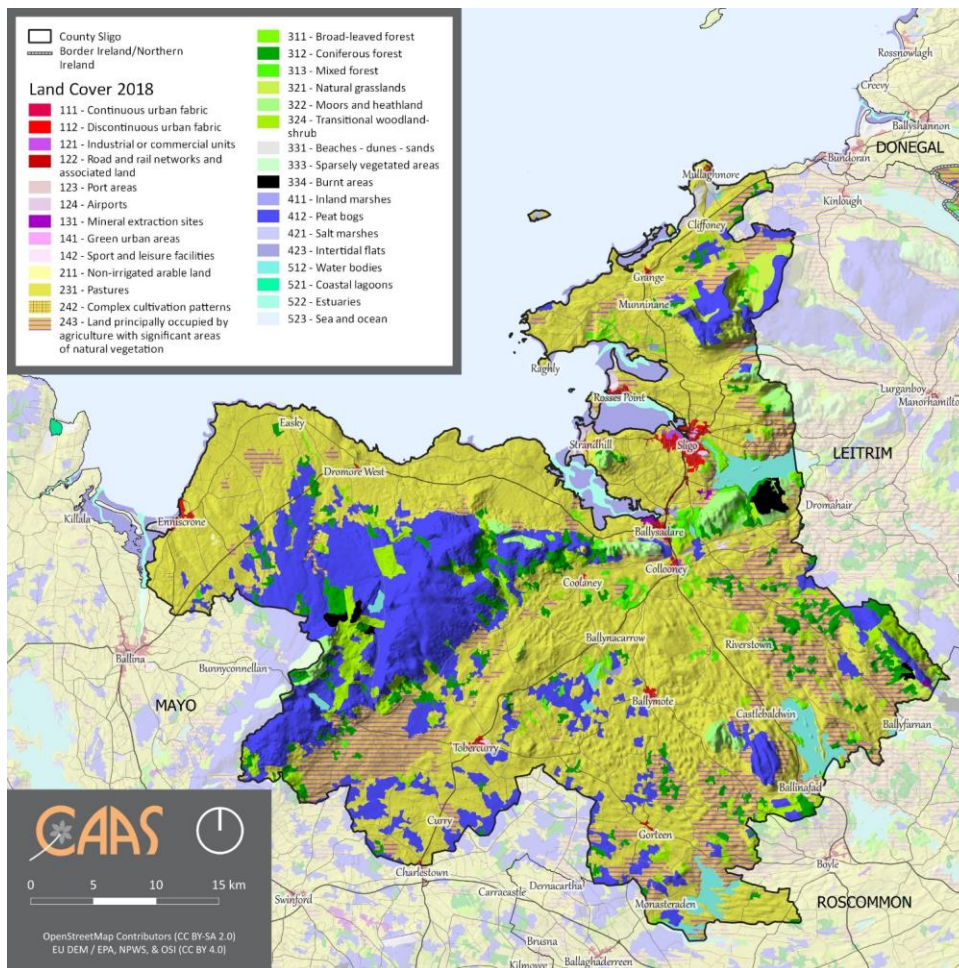
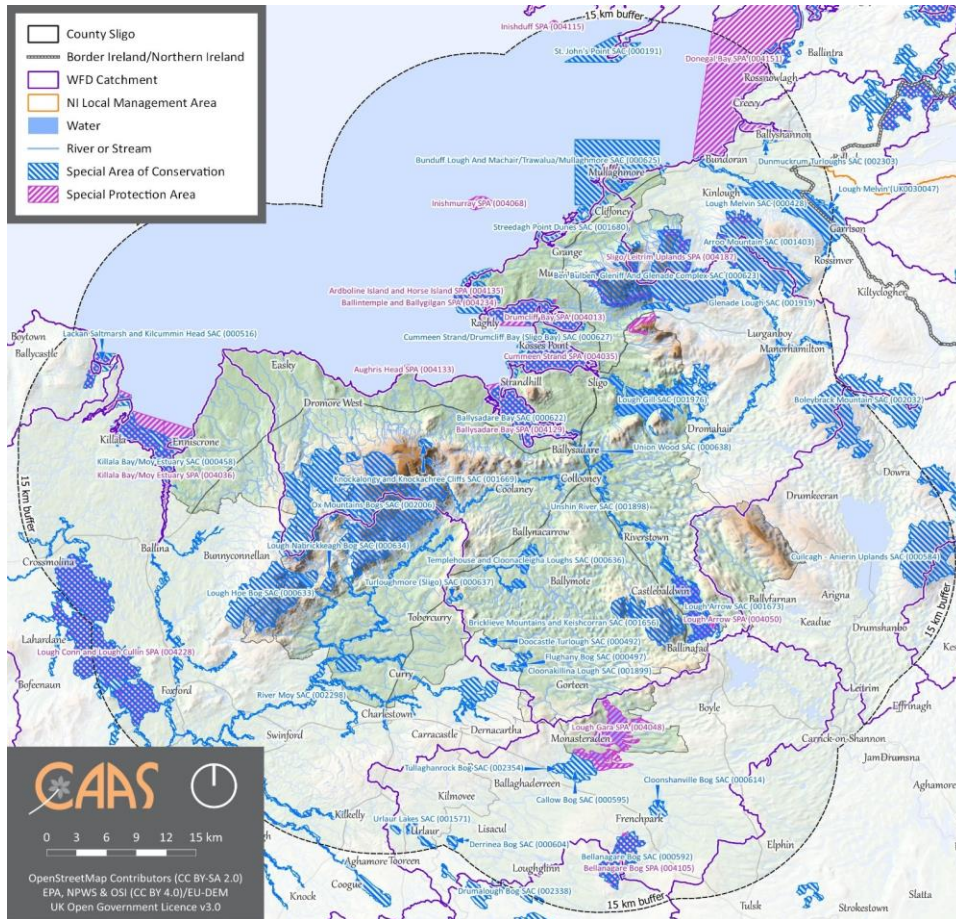
The greatest health risk from radiation in Ireland is caused by radon. The presence of radon gas, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that originates from the decay of uranium in rocks and soils, occurs across the country. The number of homes within the area to which the Plan relates with radon levels above the reference level is within the normal range experienced in other locations across the country.

### 3.5 Soil

Active blanket bogs and active raised bogs are considered to be priority habitats, listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Ombrotrophic (rain-fed) and minerotrophic (groundwater fed) peat soils are often indicative of areas that are the most sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities and impeded drainage issues. Many of these peat areas are also subject to ecological designations. Peat soils are a dominant soil type occurring extensively within the area to which the Plan relates. Other soil types identified across the area to which the Plan relates include: brown podzolics; brown earths; alluvial soils; lithosol soils; rendzinas; luvisols; and surface water and groundwater gleys. Areas of tidal marsh occur along estuaries surrounding the area to which the Plan relates and blown sand and dunes occur in the north of the area to which the Plan relates. These areas are often very sensitive to development due to ecological sensitivities. Outcropping rock is found mainly in the coastal and upland areas.

Geological Survey of Ireland coordinates the Irish Geological Heritage Programme, which seeks to identify and select sites of geological interest within each county across the country. The audit report of geological sites in County Sligo was published in 2004. There are 25 County Geological Sites designated across the area to which the Plan relates, with the highest concentration of these sites occurring within coastal and upland locations.

The area to which the Plan relates has numerous locations with a history of landslide events and many of these events are associated with the peatland and upland areas. The GSI have identified the area to which the Plan relates as having mainly low levels of landslide susceptibility with some areas of moderately low, moderately high and high levels of landslide susceptibility associated mainly with peatlands and coastal and upland locations.





## 3.6 Water

### Surface and Ground Water Status

Since 2000, Water Management in the EU has been directed by the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD). The WFD requires that all Member States implement the necessary measures to prevent deterioration of the status of all waters - surface, ground, estuarine and coastal - and protect, enhance and restore all waters with the aim of achieving *good status*.

The main waterbodies in the area to which the Plan relates include: Donegal Bay; Sligo Bay; Killala Bay; Garavogue Estuary; Ballysadare Estuary; Lough Gara; Lough Gill; Lough Arrow; Garavogue River; and Owengarve River.

The WFD surface water status (2016-2021) for rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waterbodies within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates, including a number of unassigned, waterbodies is shown on Figure 3.3. The WFD status of the rivers and lakes within the area to which the Plan relates is classified as *high*, *good* and *moderate* however, sections<sup>4</sup> of rivers and streams (including: Bunnanaddan Stream; Cartonkillerdoe; Douglas, Sligo; Garavogue; Grange, Sligo; Owenmore, Sligo; Tubbercurry Stream; Tubbercurry; and Gill) are identified as being of *poor*, while the Templehouse Lake is identified as *bad* due to unsatisfactory ecological/biological and/or physio-chemical status. The status (2016-2021) of transitional and coastal waterbodies within and adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates ranges from *moderate* to *high* and *good*, including a number of *unassigned* waterbodies. The most recent available data from the EPA for 2021<sup>5</sup> shows that locations of designated bathing waters (shown on Figure 3.3) are classified as *sufficient* at Mullaghmore Beach and Enniscrone Beach, *good* at Dunmoran Beach and *excellent* at Rosses Point and Streedagh.

The WFD groundwater status (2016-2021) of all groundwater underlying the area to which the Plan relates is identified as being of good status, meeting the objectives of the WFD.

The WFD status of river and coastal waterbodies in Northern Ireland (2018) adjacent to the area to which the Plan relates is also shown on Figure 3.3.

### Aquifer Vulnerability

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the ease with which pollutants of various kinds can enter into groundwater. The aquifers underlying most the Plan area are generally classified as being of *High*, *Moderate* or *Low vulnerability*. Extreme vulnerability and extreme (rock at or near surface or karst) is found mainly throughout within and along coastal and upland locations within the area to which the Plan relates.

### Flooding

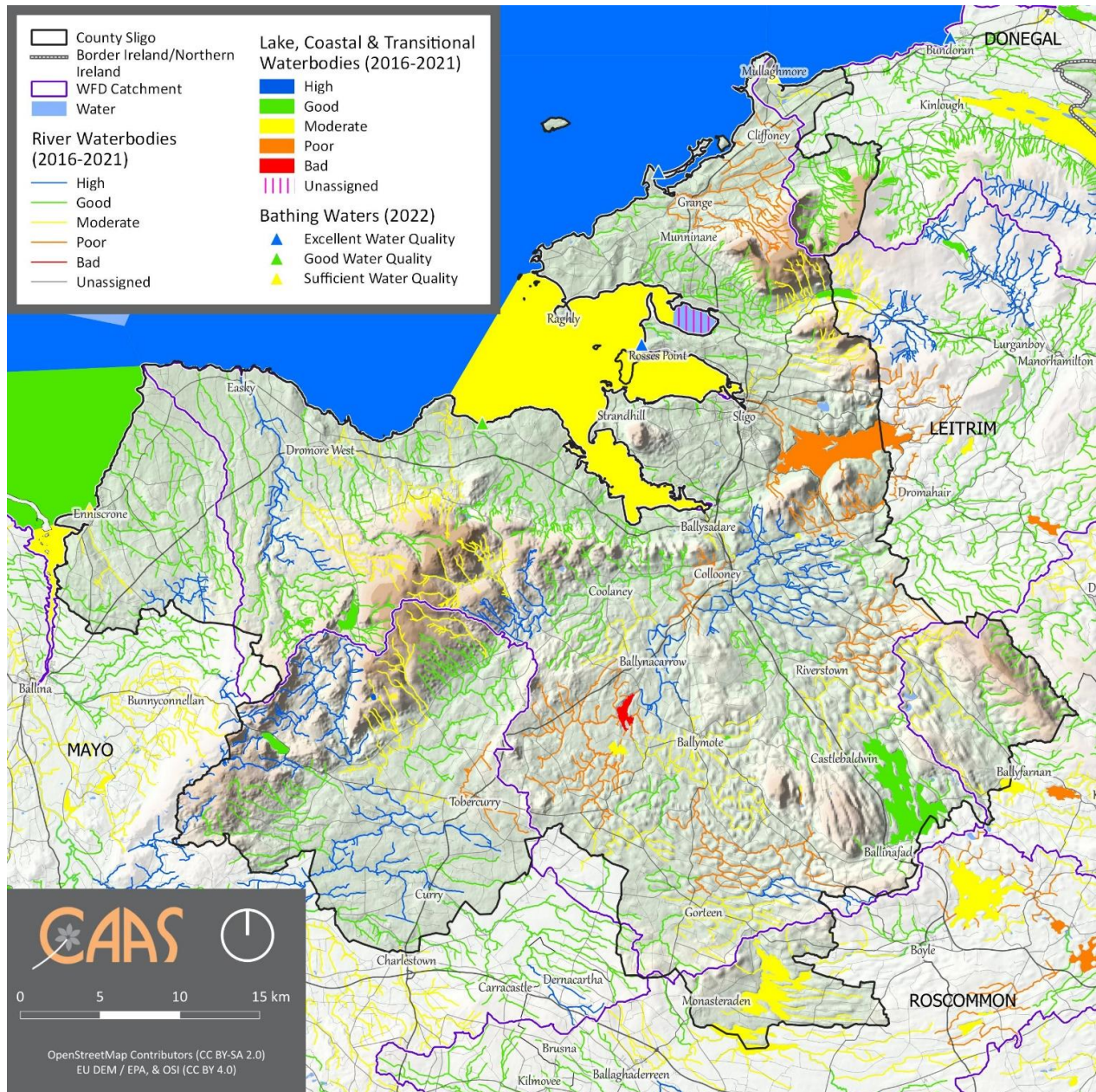
The existence of flood risk across the country is illustrated by various sources of information on historical flooding events – including those available from the Office of Public Works, the lead Authority on flooding in the country, National Flood Hazard Mapping website. In addition to this historic mapping there is predictive, modelled Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Flood Risk and Hazard mapping available from the OPW including through the National Catchment Flood Risk Management Programme. These mapping sources identify flood risk from various sources, including fluvial, pluvial, coastal and groundwater. The Flood Risk and Hazard mapping has informed the preparation of Flood Risk Management Plans, which have been in force since 2018 across different parts of the Plan area.

Certain areas across the area to which the Plan relates are at risk from pluvial, fluvial and coastal flooding. Historical flooding is documented at a number of locations within the area to which the Plan relates.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as required by the 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (OPW and DEHLG, 2009) is relevant to project planning and development and associated environmental assessment and administrative consent of projects.

<sup>4</sup> As per EPA classification system ([gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps](https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps)).

<sup>5</sup> EPA (2022) Report: *Bathing Water Quality in Ireland 2021*



**Figure 3.3 Surface Water Status (2016-2021) and Bathing Water Status (2021)**

### 3.7 Air and Climatic Factors

Various provisions relating to climatic factors have been integrated into the Plan, compliance with which will need to be demonstrated by those seeking or maintaining funding from Fáilte Ireland. Such measures include those relating to:

- Walking and cycling; and
- Contribution towards European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation, taking into account a wide range of detailed measures including those relating to resilience.

Interactions with climatic factors are also present with other environmental components including water/flooding (see Section 3.6).

Total emissions of greenhouse gases by humans come from various sectors including transport, agriculture, energy industries, manufacturing combustion, industrial processes, residential developments, commercial services developments, waste management processes and fluorinated gases equipment (such as refrigeration and fire protection systems).

The National Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting Ireland on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as set out in the Climate Act 2021. The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. The upcoming Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) will be the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. CAP24 builds upon CAP23 by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The Plan will provide a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

In order to apply with European Directives relating to air quality, the EPA manages the National Ambient Air Quality Network and measures the levels of a number of atmospheric pollutants at locations across the country.

## 3.8 Material Assets

### Wastewater

Based on the EPA's assessment of monitoring information provided by Uisce Éireann and the enforcement activities carried out by the EPA, this report identifies urban areas with the most important environmental issues that must be addressed. None of the Wastewater Treatment Plants in County Sligo (and within the area to which the Plan relates) are currently listed as a priority area.

The area to which the Plan relates is served by combined sewer networks, including septic tanks and sewerage treatment schemes serving agglomerations under 500 Population Equivalent (PE) and urban WWTPs. As identified in the existing Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied and extended), there are 31 major wastewater treatment schemes within County Sligo, of varying size and complexity. Outside serviced towns and villages, much of the wastewater produced is treated and disposed of onsite by means of individual septic tanks and proprietary effluent treatment systems.

### Water Supply

Currently there are eight schemes supplying public water throughout Sligo comprising: Carns Hill Water Supply Scheme; Foxes Den Water Supply Scheme; Kilsellagh Water Supply Scheme; Lough Easky Regional Scheme; Lough Talt Regional Scheme; North Sligo Regional Scheme; South Sligo Regional Scheme; Riverstown Regional Scheme; and Killaraght Regional Scheme. In rural areas, individual wells are used to serve farms and single houses.

As identified in the existing Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied and extended), there are two main sources of water supplying the Sligo and Environs area, namely Kilsellagh Reservoir and Lough Gill. The Sligo and Environs Water Supply Scheme is designed to provide for the domestic, agricultural and industrial water requirements of Sligo City and its outlying regions, such as Ballincar, Rosses Point, Strandhill, Ballysadare, Collooney and Ballintogher. Lough Talt Regional Water Supply covers the area of County Sligo east of the Ox Mountains. It supplies to Ballymote, Bellaghy, Coolaney, Ballinacarrow, Aclare, Banada, Cloonacool, Curry and Tobercurry. Currently there is a water treatment plant at Kilsellagh and two plants treating water from Lough Gill – Cairns Hill and Foxes Den.

Uisce Éireann is responsible for providing and maintaining adequate public water supply infrastructure. Public group water schemes are maintained and monitored by Sligo County Council. Uisce Éireann is currently preparing a National Water Resources Plan (NWRP)<sup>6</sup> to address urgent issues with the supply and demand for drinking water in Ireland over the short, medium and long term.

Under Section 58 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, the EPA is required to collect and verify monitoring results for all water supplies in Ireland covered by the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2000. The EPA publishes their results in annual reports that are supported by Remedial Action Lists (RALs). The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the Regulations mentioned above. The RAL identifies water supplies that are not in compliance with the

<sup>6</sup> The preparation of the NWRP has been divided into two phases, the combination of which will become the final NWRP. The NWRP Framework Plan (Phase 1) has now been adopted. Phase 2 of the NWRP (four Regional Water Resources Plans), currently in preparation, will address the needs across the 535 individual water supplies and identify the solutions to address these needs. <https://www.water.ie/projects/strategic-plans/national-water-resources/>

Regulations mentioned above. The most recent EPA Remedial Action List (Q4 of 2023) does not include any water scheme that supplies the Plan area.

### **Public Assets and Infrastructure**

Some bigger settlements across the area to which the Plan relates include: Sligo, Ballymote, Enniscrone, Tubbercurry, Ballysadare, Colloney, Coolaney, Grange and Strandhill.

The area to which the Plan relates is served by rail, bus, cycle network, regional and strategic roads. There are three railway stations in Sligo that are served by the train line to Dublin – Sligo Mac Diarmada Station (Sligo Town), Collooney Station and Ballymote Station. The ports and harbours located across the area to which the Plan relates have many functions including transport, fishing, marine leisure, tourism and recreational uses.

The area to which the Plan relates provides with access to Wild Atlantic Way, the natural environment and other significant cultural, tourism, recreation and sports assets including access to lakes, forests and mountains.

Public assets and infrastructure that have the potential to be impacted upon by the development of tourism related infrastructure, if unmitigated, include resources such as public open spaces, parks and recreational areas; public buildings and services; utility infrastructure (electricity, gas, telecommunications, water supply, wastewater infrastructure etc.). These resources are generally located within the immediate outskirts of urban/suburban areas.

### **Green Infrastructure**

Parks and open space promote health and well-being, provide recreational facilities and range of habitats for various species. Green infrastructure is also a crucial component in building resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate change with trees, woodlands and wetlands providing carbon capture and slowing water flows while improving air quality.

### **Woodlands**

Woodlands provide recreational opportunities in addition to their heritage and economic benefits. They are a valuable resource in terms of biodiversity, recreation and tourism, and also important as links in the county's green infrastructure network.

### **Peatlands**

Peatlands provide a valuable natural and archaeological resource. Peatlands are also important controllers of water levels in river catchments, providing a source of water in dry conditions and soaking up excess water during wetter periods; they actively capture and hold carbon and are an important natural resource in combatting climate change. Cutaway bogs have the potential to facilitate land uses such as employment, renewable energy generation, waste management, industrial, and tourism and recreation.

### **Coastline**

The coastline and coastal erosion are topics with relevance to various environmental components. Coastlines can be amongst the most sensitive and valuable resources, in terms of natural and cultural heritage, scenic beauty and recreation. The coast is also an important economic resource - particularly for the fishing, aquaculture, leisure and tourism industries. Some of the settlements within the area to which the Plan relates have developed along or near the coast.

### **Waste Management**

Waste management across the area to which the Plan relates is guided by the Connacht-Ulster Region Waste Management Plan 2015-2021. The Connacht Ulster Region comprises: Cavan County Council; Donegal County Council; Galway City Council; Galway County Council; Leitrim County Council; Mayo County Council; Mayo County Council; Monaghan County Council; and Roscommon County Council. The Plan provides a framework for the prevention and management of waste in a sustainable manner.

## **3.9 Cultural Heritage**

### **Archaeological Heritage**

Archaeological heritage is protected under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), Natural Cultural Institutions Act 1997 and the Planning Acts. The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is an inventory, put on a statutory basis by amendment to the National Monuments Act 1994, of sites and areas of

archaeological significance, numbered and mapped. A Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is a manual containing a numbered list of all certain and possible monuments. An Urban Archaeology Survey was completed in 1995 and contained reports on historic towns dating to before 1700 A.D. with a view to delineating zones of archaeological potential (SMR Zones of Notification). The SMR formed the basis for issuing the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) - the statutory list of recorded monuments established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994.

To date there has been over 6,500 known Recorded Monuments identified in County Sligo including many monuments in State Care (such as: Rathmore Holy Well; Knockmullin Burial Ground; Cabragh Wedge Tomb; and Rathbarran Mass Rock). Each of the Recorded Monuments is encircled by a Zone of Archaeological Notification. Clusters of archaeological heritage are concentrated within and surrounding towns and villages and in lowland rural areas. Figure 3.4 shows the spatial distribution of recorded monuments, including entries to SMR and RMP, within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates.

A Tentative List is an inventory of natural and cultural heritage sites, which may have potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value and therefore considered suitable for nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Irish heritage sites currently on Tentative List and within the area to which the Plan relates include "The Passage Tomb Landscape (Carrowmore and Carrowkeel in County Sligo)".

Lakes, rivers, estuaries, coastal and transitional waters within and surrounding the area to which the Plan relates, may contain many features and finds associated with maritime/riverine heritage such as shipwrecks, piers, quay walls, fords, stepping stones and associated archaeological objects and features.

### **Architectural Heritage**

Records of Protected Structures are legislated for under Section 12 and Section 51 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. Protected structures are defined in the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view.

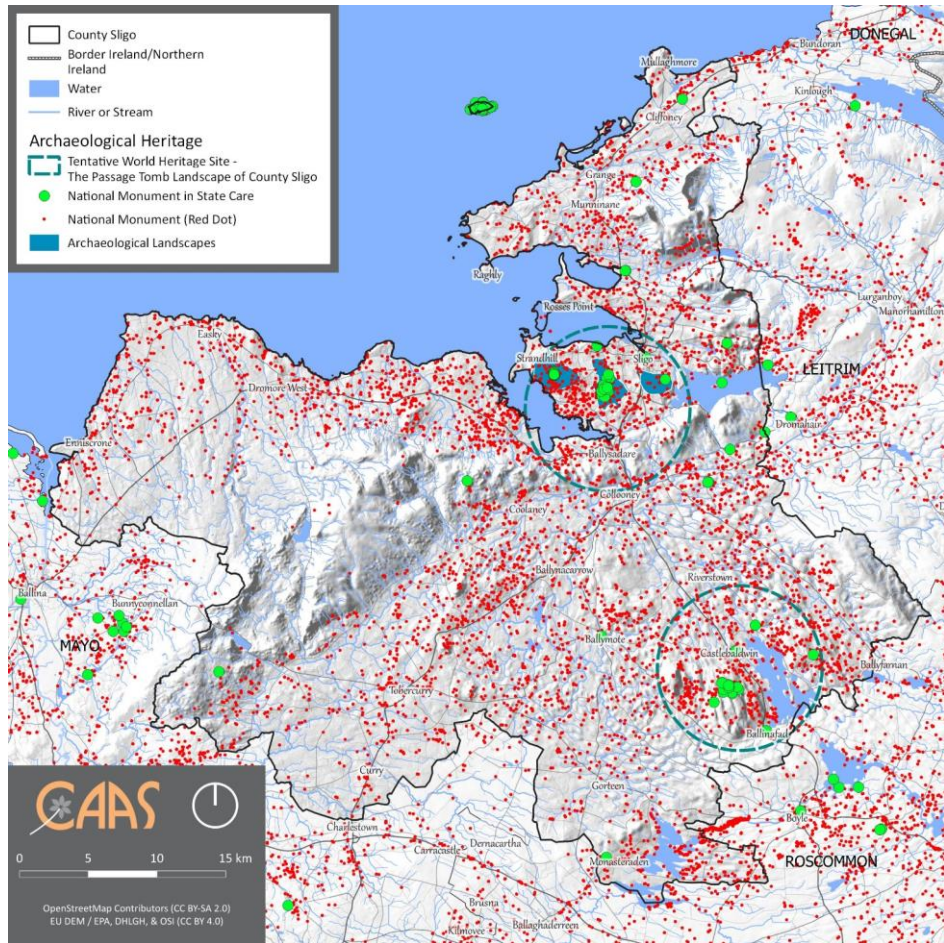
Similar to the general spatial spread of archaeological heritage, clusters of architectural heritage are indicated within the area to which the Plan relates, as shown on Figure 3.5. There are currently over 700 Protected Structures designated in County Sligo, including churches, houses, bridges, castles, lodges and artisan dwellings. Notable protected structures in County Sligo include: St. Crumnath's Cathedral; Pollachurry Pier; Coastguard Station; Oyster Island Lighthouse; Sligo Gaol; and Markree Demesne.

In addition to Protected Structures, the Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides the legislative basis for the protection of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The ACA designation requires that planning permission must be obtained before significant works can be carried out to the exterior of a structure in the ACA that might alter the character of the structure or the ACA. There are currently seven ACAs designated in County Sligo: two ACAs in Ballymote; and Market Cross ACA; Courthouse ACA; Cathedral ACA; Wolfe Tones ACA; and O'Connell Street ACA in Sligo Town.

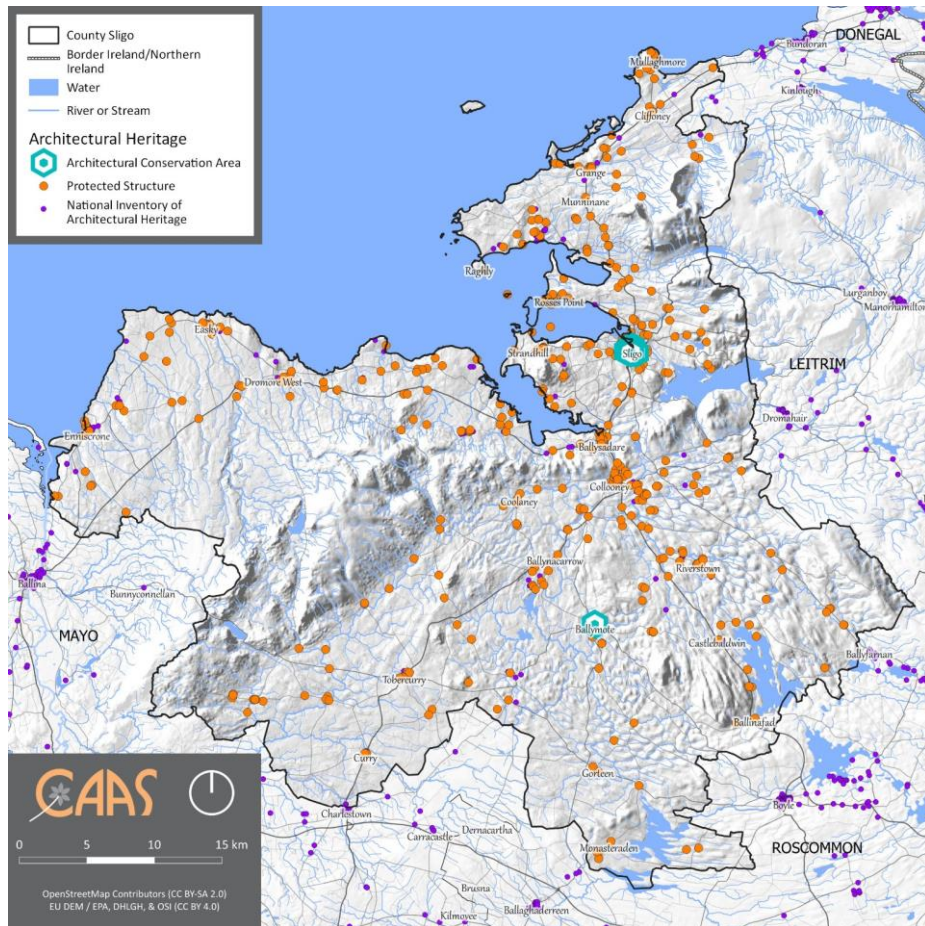
## **3.10 Landscape**

The area to which the Plan relates is characterised by a variety of mainly rural landscapes, including rough pasture predominantly in the mountains, hills, and peat bogs. On the east, the boundary with County Leitrim runs southward through the coastal lowland to the limestone Dartry Mountains, including Benbulbin Mountain (noted as one of Ireland's most distinctive natural landmarks). The County boundary crosses Glencar and an area of plateau to Lough Gill with the island of Innisfree. West of the Collooney Gap, the ridge forms the Ox Mountains and a peat moorland and to the north an area of continuously farmed lowland, from the mouth of the River Moy to the Leitrim border. The coastal areas of the County include Sligo Bay with three long estuaries, leading to the towns of Drumcliff, Sligo, and Ballysadare, which receive the waters of the Rivers Drumcliff, Garravogue, and Owenmore.

The different landscapes found across the area to which the Plan relates have varying visual and amenity values, topography, exposure levels and contain a variety of habitats. Each landscape type has varying capacity to absorb development related to its overall sensitivity.



**Figure 3.4 Archaeological Heritage**



**Figure 3.5 Architectural Heritage**

### 3.11 Strategic Environmental Objectives

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies that generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives that have been transposed into Irish law and that are required to be implemented. The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Plan and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

**Table 3.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives**

| <b>Environmental Component</b>       | <b>Code</b> | <b>Strategic Environmental Objectives</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b> | <b>B1</b>   | To contribute towards compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of European sites and Annexed habitats and species <sup>7</sup>  |
|                                      | <b>B2</b>   | To contribute towards compliance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive with regard to the management of features of the landscape which - by virtue of their linear and continuous structure or their function act as stepping stones (designated or not) - are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species |
|                                      | <b>B3</b>   | To contribute towards avoidance of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites <sup>8</sup> and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife Acts 1976-2010 with regard to the protection of species listed on Schedule 5 of the principal Act  |
| <b>Population and Human Health</b>   | <b>PHH1</b> | To contribute towards the protection of populations and human health from exposure to incompatible landuses  |
| <b>Soil</b>                          | <b>S1</b>   | To minimise land take and loss to extent of soil resource  |
| <b>Water</b>                         | <b>W1</b>   | To contribute towards the maintenance and improvement, where possible, of the quality and status of surface waters   |
|                                      | <b>W2</b>   | To contribute towards maintaining and improving, where possible, the chemical and quantitative status of groundwaters  |
|                                      | <b>W3</b>   | To contribute towards compliance with the provisions of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines   |
| <b>Air and Climatic Factors</b>      | <b>AC1</b>  | To contribute towards climate adaptation and mitigation, air quality and noise management objectives.  |
| <b>Material Assets</b>               | <b>M1</b>   | For development to be served with adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) that does not present a danger to human health   |
|                                      | <b>M2</b>   | To contribute towards the protection of public assets and infrastructure, including that relating to recreation and leisure, transport, utilities and fisheries  |
|                                      | <b>M3</b>   | To reduce waste volumes, minimise waste to landfill and increase recycling and reuse   |
| <b>Cultural Heritage</b>             | <b>CH1</b>  | To contribute towards the protection of archaeological heritage including entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context   |
|                                      | <b>CH2</b>  | To contribute towards the protection of architectural heritage including entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context   |
| <b>Landscape</b>                     | <b>L1</b>   | To avoid conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans   |

<sup>7</sup> 'Annexed habitats and species' refer to those listed under Annex I, II & IV of the EU Habitats Directive and Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

<sup>8</sup> The definition of a 'wildlife site' provided by the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, includes Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed NHAs.

## Section 4 Alternatives

### 4.1 Description of Alternatives

#### Alternative 1: Business as Usual

As identified in the Plan, there are various **opportunities** associated with the current tourism development situation include:

- Year round experience development based on the extensive outdoor adventure product base of the county.
- Cluster approach to experience development leveraging world class experiences such as surfing, mountain biking and golf.
- Revitalisation of urban areas and small towns as tourism destinations through public realm enhancement projects.
- Building on the water heritage of Sligo by raising the profile of the Garvogue River corridor from Lough Gill to the ocean through the core of Sligo.
- Development of greenways and related walking infrastructure, including the 'joining-up' and repositioning of existing assets.
- Development of cultural experiences and evening economy opportunities around music and heritage of traditional music in Sligo.
- Regional linkages through product development that can influence new visitors flows into the county such as greenways, Lough Gill links to Parkes Castle, coastal trails.
- Potential of the Neolithic landscapes as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Water based tourism experience development from coastal tourism to future Blueway development.
- Developing niche business tourism opportunities.
- Linking tourism industry development through digital capability building and Sligo's economic ambition around technology.
- Development of a Sligo Wellbeing experience base approach linked to food, place, community and culture.
- Building on the county's portfolio of iconic natural and cultural heritage such as Ben Bulbin.
- Elevate the food and drink opportunity for Sligo arising from new large scale investment in Lough Gill.

However, there are a number of **challenges** associated with this situation, including:

- Fragmented industry approach with limited levels of networking or collaboration to grow the appeal of the destination.
- Significant level of seasonality associated with Sligo tourism economy.
- Visitor dispersion across the county and reducing transient nature of destination with visitors associating it as a 'pass' through destination.
- Lack of coherent destination narrative and messaging in the marketplace.
- Limited destination 'cut through' in the international marketplace with significant dependency on the domestic market.
- No flagship visitor attraction associated with Sligo.
- Limited range and choice of accommodation options outside of Sligo town.
- Gaps in accommodation stock ranging from hotels to alternative sources of visitor accommodation across the county.
- Pace of delivery of large scale capital projects that have the scope to transform the tourism experience base.
- Low engagement with tourism opportunity outside of a number of core areas in the county.
- Key cultural assets and heritage not accessible to visitors due to limited number of experiences i.e. music.
- The need to balance environmental objectives versus creating new visitor experiences linked to the activity sector and meeting visitor expectations around sustainable tourism practice.
- Current levels of online and digital marketing among the tourism industry making it difficult for visitors to engage with the destination from pre visit information to booking experiences.
- Issue of insurance limiting the growth of outdoor activity providers in the destination.
- Ability to attract and retain staff into tourism and hospitality careers affecting ability to operate in off peak seasons.
- Reinvigorating the existing visitor attraction base to develop new visitor.

This current situation presents **Alternative 1 (Business as Usual)** to be considered by the SEA. Overtime, numbers of visitors would continue to increase under this scenario – consistent with the development of tourism over many decades.

#### Prepare a Plan (Alternatives 2A and 2B: Prepare a Plan)

The weaknesses presented by the current situation establish a potential need for a plan that seeks to better manage tourism in the Sligo DEDP area; facilitating, promoting, supporting and coordinating stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. Such a Plan would not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent (such frameworks fall under the remit of other public authorities). Any projects would continue to be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.



Features of such a Plan (in combination with the wider and extensive policy and wider and extensive policy and planning framework) would include:

- Grow the year-round appeal of the Wild Atlantic Way domestically and internationally ensuring the area attracts and disperses high value visitors into and throughout the region.
- Raise the international profile of the Northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way to increase visitation and revenue.
- Increase tourism revenue, visitor dispersion and season extension across the Southern half of the Wild Atlantic Way.
- Protect the authenticity and "wildness" of the Wild Atlantic Way.
- Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability so that it can thrive over the period of this plan.
- Foster strong coalitions of industry and stakeholders with a common purpose in creating flourishing destinations and thriving communities.

Fáilte Ireland will track progress through a series of performance indicators that will be monitored annually. The existence of compelling and saleable visitor experiences is the vehicle for:

- Increase bed-nights by 2% year over year ahead of national average from year 3 of implementation of this Destination and Experience Development Plan.
- Increase revenue to attractions by 2% ahead of the national average from implementation.
- Increase length of stay.
- Increase in the saleable product (5 new saleable experiences), improved experiences and better distribution.
- Season extension: extend opening hours annually by 5% annually.
- Increased visitor satisfaction – benchmarked through measures such as Net Promoter Score.

Under Alternative 2 there are two separate alternatives:

### **Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management**

Fáilte Ireland provides funding sustainable tourism projects including land use and infrastructural development and land use activities. In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, **Alternative 2A** would require Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders to demonstrate compliance with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "Site Maintenance Guidelines" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others" (and any subsequent replacements).

In order to be realised, projects included in the Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) would have to demonstrate compliance, as relevant, with various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the **Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.**

**Further environmental requirements would be integrated into the Plan under Alternative 2A, relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management and green infrastructure and ecosystem services.**

### **Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management**

Alternative 2B would not include the requirements for environmental protection and management described under Alternative 2A. Projects would continue to be required to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of documents that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework.

## **4.2 Detailed Consideration of Alternatives**

### **Alternative 1: Business as Usual**

Sustainable development, environmental management and environmental protection under Alternative 1 is provided through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. These measures would contribute towards positive effects on the protection and management of all environmental components.

Tourism-related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

In the absence of a Plan, there would continue to be an increase in tourist numbers – consistent with the development of tourism over many decades. The most popular locations in the Sligo DEDP area would see the largest increases in visitors, which would occur during the peak season. This would give rise to greater concentration of tourists during peak seasons and in the most popular locations thereby increasing potential environmental effects on all components and peak load additions on various infrastructure in particular locations/at particular times.

Contributions towards an increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation, would not occur as a result of a Plan that seeks to lengthen dwell time and grow visitor numbers however increases in tourist numbers would occur. Similarly, the positive mitigatory effects as a result of provisions of a Plan, such as those relating to sustainable mobility, traffic management and compliance with climate adaptation and management plans/strategies would not be provided for.

There would be one layer of mitigation under Alternative 1, through the existing statutory planning and consent framework.

### **Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management**

In addition to the measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection, environmental management which are provided under all alternatives, and measures relating to seasonality and regionality, provided for by this alternative and Alternative 2B, this alternative would provide additional requirements for environmental protection and management, including those taken from the Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme and those relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management and green infrastructure and ecosystem services. In order to be realised, projects included in the Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) would have to demonstrate compliance, as relevant, with various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Tourism-related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue to be mitigated through that process.

Although a Plan would help to improve the seasonal and geographic spread of visitors, a Plan's objective would be to increase the number of visitors to the Sligo DEDP area. Although this would be likely to happen without a Plan, a Plan would have the potential to increase numbers of tourists – and associated potential adverse effects – to a greater degree than would be the case if there was no Plan. This would be likely to contribute towards an increase in travel-related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. These increases will be mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable mobility and compliance with the Climate Action Plan 2023 (and emerging Climate Action plan 2024), the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).

A Plan would also help to promote new experiences – including those relating to land use activities and developments. These would also have the potential to increase adverse effects. Notwithstanding this, there would be three layers of mitigation, through:

- The existing statutory planning and consent framework;
- Visitor management strategies; and
- Additional environmental requirements for environmental protection and management, under this alternative.

### Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

In addition to the measures relating to sustainable development, environmental management and environmental protection, which are provided under all alternatives, this Alternative (2B) would provide measures to improve seasonality and regionality. Seasonality and regionality would provide a greater spread of tourists throughout the year and across the Sligo DEDP area thereby reducing potential environmental effects and peak load additions on various infrastructure in particular locations/at particular times.

Tourism related development would continue to be planned for and consented through the existing statutory planning and consent framework. Potential adverse effects would continue be mitigated through that process.

Although a Plan would help to improve the seasonal and geographic spread of visitors, a Plan's objective would be to increase the number of visitors to the Sligo DEDP area. Although this would be likely to happen without a Plan, a Plan would have the potential to increase numbers of tourists – and associated potential adverse effects – to a greater degree than would be the case if there was no Plan.

This would be likely to contribute towards in an increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. These increases would be mitigated by the wider planning framework.

A Plan would also help to promote new experiences – including those relating to land use activities and developments. These would also have the potential to increase adverse effects. Notwithstanding this, there would be one layer of mitigation, through the existing statutory planning and consent framework.

Table 4.1 below provides a comparative evaluation of alternatives against SEOs (for detailed SEOs please refer to Table 3.1).

**Table 4.1 Comparative Evaluation of Alternatives against SEOs**

|  | Likely to <b>Improve</b> status of SEO |                           |                           | <b>Potential Conflict</b> with status of SEOs - likely to be mitigated by complying with other measures included within the Plan |                            | Probable <b>Conflict</b> with status of SEOs- unlikely to be fully mitigated |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
|  | to the <b>Greatest</b> degree          | to <b>Moderate</b> degree | to a <b>Lesser</b> degree | to a <b>Moderate</b> degree  | to a <b>Greater</b> degree |  |
| Alternative 1: Business as Usual   |  |                           | ✓                         |  | ✓                          |  |
| Alternative 2A: A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management    | ✓                                      |                           |                           | ✓  |                            |  |
| Alternative 2B: A Plan without Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management |  | ✓                         |                           |  | ✓                          |  |

### 4.3 Selected Alternative for the Plan

Taking into account the environmental effects detailed above and the challenges and opportunities present for tourism across the Sligo DEDP area, Fáilte Ireland have proceeded with Alternative 2A "A Plan with Additional Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management".

## Section 5 Summary of Effects arising from Plan

**Table 5.1 Overall Findings – Environmental Effects arising from Plan Provisions**

| Environmental Component                 | Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework <sup>9</sup>   |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | <b>Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur</b>  | <b>Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated</b>  | <b>Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects</b>   |
| <b>Biodiversity and flora and fauna</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards the protection and management of biodiversity and flora and fauna (in designated sites, including European sites and Wildlife Sites, and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats) including through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Visitor management strategies; and</li> <li>○ Plan requirements for environmental protection and management.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contributes towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services.</li> <li>• Contribution towards protection of biodiversity and flora and fauna as a result of contributing towards the protection of environmental vectors, air, water and soil.</li> </ul> | <p>Arising from both construction and operation of tourism related development/activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of/damage to biodiversity in designated sites (including European sites and Wildlife Sites) and Annexed habitats and species, listed species, ecological connectivity and non-designated habitats; and disturbance to biodiversity and flora and fauna;</li> <li>• Habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration, including patch size and edge effects; and</li> <li>• Disturbance (e.g. due to noise and lighting along transport corridors) - and displacement of protected species such as birds and bats.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of an extent of non-protected habitats and species arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces arising from projects consented through the statutory planning/consent-granting framework.</li> <li>• Losses or damage to ecology (these would be: in compliance with relevant legislation; and mitigated as projects would demonstrate compliance with various environmental protection and management measures)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Population and human health</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of human health including through Plan requirements for environmental protection and management.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of human health as a result of not directing additional tourists towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the protection amenity usage and access.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the sustainable growth of tourism and associated sustenance and growth of communities in the Sligo DEDP area.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential interactions if effects upon environmental vectors such as water are not mitigated.</li> <li>• Potential interactions if additional tourists are directed towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential interactions with residual effects on environmental vectors. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.</li> </ul>   |

<sup>9</sup> Effects include in-combination effects – those arising from services, infrastructure and other development (to service development, including tourism) that are planned for and consented through the statutory framework including the NPF, RSES and lower-tier land use plans. Examples may include developments/operation of developments relating to water services, transport, access or accommodation. Mitigation includes that which has been integrated into the Plan – please refer to Section 9 of this report.

| Environmental Component         | Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework <sup>9</sup>   |   |   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                                 | Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur   | Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated  | Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects  |
| <b>Soil</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various provisions (e.g. relating to maintaining the wildness of areas that have not yet been developed) help to minimise land-take and loss of extent of soil resource.</li> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of the environment from contamination.</li> <li>• Contributes towards protection of designated sites of geological heritage.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse impacts upon the hydrogeological and ecological function of the soil resource.</li> <li>• Adverse effects on designated geological heritage sites.</li> <li>• Potential for increase in river bank erosion.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of an extent of soil function arising from the replacement of semi-natural land covers with artificial surfaces.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Water</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards the protection of water resources (including the status of surface and groundwaters) and water-based designations including through integrating requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.</li> <li>• Contribution towards flood risk management and appropriate drainage.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse impacts upon the status of water bodies and entries to the WFD Register of Protected Areas (ecological and human value), arising from changes in quality, flow and/or morphology.</li> <li>• Increase in flood risk.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased loadings as a result of development to comply with River Basin Management Plan.</li> <li>• Flood related risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to extreme weather events – however such risks will be mitigated by: measures that have been integrated into the Plan; and the statutory planning/consent-granting framework.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Air and climatic factors</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution towards climate adaptation and mitigation through measures relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Walking and cycling; and</li> <li>◦ Contribution towards European and national objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation, taking into account a wide range of detailed measures including those relating to resilience.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential conflict, in combination with plans and programmes from all sectors including transport and land use planning, between increases in visitors (which is likely to result in an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions to air, including from aviation, with associated interactions with climatic factors) and local, national and European objectives to reduce carbon emissions.</li> <li>• Potential conflicts between transport movements, including car movements, and air quality.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air, including from aviation. This has been mitigated by provisions that have been integrated into the Plan, including those relating to sustainable mobility and compliance with the Climate Action Plan 2023, the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).</li> <li>• Risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to climate and interactions with issues including flooding and material assets.</li> </ul>                                       |
| <b>Material Assets</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes towards protection and allows for continued use of public assets and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Contains clear objectives around seasonality and regionality which look not only to spread the benefits of tourism but also the potential impacts/ load associated with tourism.</li> <li>• Helps to minimise likelihood of exceeding capacity in material assets as a result of not directing additional tourists towards specific locations in instances where significant problems with critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) have been identified.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of visitors have the potential to increase traffic levels.</li> <li>• The need to provide adequate and appropriate water services (it is the function of Uisce Éireann to provide for such needs).</li> <li>• Increases in waste levels and residual wastes from visitors and construction of developments.</li> <li>• Potential impacts upon public assets and infrastructure.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residual wastes to be disposed of in line with higher level waste management policies.</li> <li>• Increased loading on critical infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) where no significant problems have been identified with this infrastructure.</li> <li>• Exceedance of capacity in critical infrastructure risks remain due to uncertainty with regard to climate – however such risks will be mitigated by: measures that have been integrated into the Plan; and the statutory planning/consent-granting framework.</li> </ul> |

| Environmental Component  | Environmental Effects, in combination with the existing statutory planning/decision-making and consent-granting framework <sup>9</sup>  |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
|                          | Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur  | Potential Significant Adverse Effect, if unmitigated  | Residual Adverse Non-Significant Effects   |
|                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards compliance with national and regional water services and waste management policies.</li> </ul>  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any impacts upon public assets and infrastructure to comply with statutory planning/consent-granting framework.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Cultural Heritage</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards the long-term protection of archaeological and architectural heritage by encouraging greater levels of awareness and appreciation through, use, interpretation and access, in line with the requirements relating to the protection of cultural heritage including: entries to the Record of Monuments and Places and/or their context; and entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on designated and unknown archaeological heritage.</li> <li>Potential effects on architectural heritage.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential alteration to the context and setting of architectural heritage however, these will occur in compliance with legislation.</li> <li>Potential alteration to the context and setting of archaeological heritage however, this will occur in compliance with legislation.</li> <li>Potential loss of unknown archaeology however, this loss will be mitigated by measures integrated into the Plan.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Landscape</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution towards the protection of landscape designations as a result of: facilitating compliance with relevant plans; and maintaining the wildness of areas that have not yet been developed.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occurrence of adverse visual impacts, especially in marine, island and ridge areas where, and conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape.</li> <li>Changes in the appearance of the landscape.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residual visual effects (these would comply with landscape designation provisions).</li> </ul>  |

## Section 6 Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

### 6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing the Plan. Various environmental sensitivities and issues have been communicated to Fáilte Ireland through the SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes.

By integrating all SEA and AA recommendations into the Plan, Fáilte Ireland is helping to ensure that:

- The potential significant adverse effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are avoided, reduced or offset; and
- The beneficial environmental effects of implementing the Plan, in combination with implementation of other provisions from the Plan and other plans, programmes, etc., are maximised.

Mitigation was achieved through the following:

- Establishing the status of the Plan and its interrelationship with the Statutory Decision-Making and Consent-Granting Framework<sup>10</sup>; and
- Integrating Requirements for Environmental Compliance into the Plan<sup>11</sup>.

The SEA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at Fáilte Ireland in order to help establish the status of the Plan and its interrelationship with the Statutory Decision-Making and Consent-Granting Framework.

Implementing the Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. **The Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.**

In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance<sup>12</sup> with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "*Site Maintenance Guidelines*" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "*Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others*" (and any subsequent replacements).

In order to be realised, projects included in the Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which the Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan is not part and does not contribute towards. Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment, including EIA and AA;
- Statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework (e.g. Development Plans, such as the existing Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied and extended) and the new upcoming Sligo CDP 2024-2030 [in preparation] and any Local Area Plans currently in force in County Sligo and that have undergone environmental assessment, as appropriate, including various provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management; and
- The Climate Action Plan 2023 (and emerging Climate Action Plan 2024) and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).

<sup>10</sup> This framework includes various environmental requirements.

<sup>11</sup> These requirements include those that have arisen through the SEA and/or AA processes.

<sup>12</sup> Demonstration of compliance may be supported by monitoring undertaken by the beneficiary.

Further measures relating to infrastructure capacity, visitor management, green infrastructure, ecosystem services and climate change have been integrated into the Plan.

## 6.2 Monitoring

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Monitoring is based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives identified at Table 3.1 and used in the evaluation.

### Sources

Confirmation of compliance with relevant environmental measures will be a source of information for the Monitoring Programme. This documentation may include monitoring undertaken by beneficiaries to demonstrate compliance with the environmental requirements.

Other existing monitoring sources will be used, including:

- Ireland environmental monitoring programmes (and any subsequent replacements), including the Monitoring Programme for the Wild Atlantic Way, a sub-programme of which will be extended to/reported on for Sligo Destination Experience Development Plan area in order to monitor any effects of visitors;
- Sources maintained by Sligo County Council (such as those arising from the SEA of land use plans) and the relevant authorities e.g. the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Central Statistics Office; and
- Lower-tier environmental assessment and decision making – including a review of project approvals granted and associated documents – will also be utilised as part of the Monitoring Programme.

### Reporting and Responsibility

Reporting on environmental monitoring will address the indicators set out below. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for the ongoing review of indicators and targets, collating existing relevant monitored data, the preparation of monitoring evaluation report(s), the publication of these reports and, if necessary, the carrying out of corrective action, in combination with the relevant authorities.

Environmental monitoring for the DEDP and other existing/future Fáilte Ireland plans, programmes, etc. may be undertaken and reported on at the same time. The findings of monitoring will be reported on periodically with frequencies to be determined during implementation.

Table 6.1 overleaf shows the current indicators and targets that have been selected for monitoring the likely significant environmental effects of implementing relevant Fáilte Ireland Plans, Programmes, etc. These monitoring measures are updated on an ongoing basis.



**Table 6.1 Selected Indicators, Targets and Monitoring Sources**

| <b>Environmental Component</b>       | <b>Indicators</b>   | <b>Targets</b>   | <b>Source and (where available) Frequency</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</b> | B1: Conservation status of habitats and species as assessed under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive  | B1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan <sup>13</sup>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Government report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every 6 years)</li> <li>• Government National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every 3 years)</li> <li>• Consultations with the NPWS</li> <li>• CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul> |
|                                      | B2: Percentage loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from the Plan  | B2: No significant ecological networks or parts thereof, which provide functional connectivity to be lost without remediation resulting from the Plan  |   |
|                                      | B3i: Number of significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from the Plan<br><br>B3ii: Number of significant impacts on the protection of listed species  | B3i: Avoid significant impacts on relevant habitats, species, environmental features or other sustaining resources in designated sites including Wildlife Sites resulting from the Plan<br><br>B3ii: No significant impacts on the protection of listed species resulting from the Plan  |   |
| <b>Population and Human Health</b>   | PHH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from the Plan, as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency  | PHH1: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result the Plan   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Consultations with the HSE and EPA</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Soil</b>                          | S1: Artificial surfaces land cover extent   | S1: Contribute towards the target of the National Planning Framework's SEA (2018) to "Maintain built surface cover nationally to below the EU average of 4%."  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• CORINE mapping resurvey (every c. 5 years)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Water</b>                         | W1i: Classification of Overall Status (comprised of ecological and chemical status) under the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009)<br><br>W1ii: Mandatory and Guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (S.I. No. 79 of 2008) | W1i: No deterioration in the status of any surface water or adverse effect upon the ability of any surface water to achieve 'good status' as a result of the Plan<br><br>W1ii: No deterioration in the value of bathing waters or adverse effect upon the ability of any bathing water to achieve Mandatory values and, where possible, Guide values as a result of the Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• Data issued under the Water Framework Directive Monitoring Programme for Ireland (multi-annual)</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>   |
|                                      | W2: Interactions with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC resulting from development adhering to the Plan  | W2: Not to affect the ability of groundwaters to comply with Groundwater Quality Standards and Threshold Values under Directive 2006/118/EC, subject to exemptions provided for by Article 4 of the WFD  |   |

<sup>13</sup> Except as provided for in Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: (a) No alternative solution available; (b) Imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the programme to proceed; and (c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

SEA Environmental Report Appendix V: Non-Technical Summary

| Environmental Component         | Indicators   | Targets   | Source and (where available) Frequency   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                                 | W3: Compliance of relevant lower tier assessments and decision making with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines  | W3: For lower tier assessments and decision making to comply with the Flood Risk Management Guidelines  |  |
| <b>Air and Climatic Factors</b> | AC1: Demonstration of compliance with provisions relating to climate adaptation and mitigation have been integrated into the Plan  | C1: To maximise the amount of measures relating to climate adaptation and mitigation being implemented  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Material Assets</b>          | M1: Number of instances whereby additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas in the Plan area where adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity is unavailable | M1: No instances whereby additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas in the Plan area where adequate and appropriate critical infrastructure with sufficient capacity that does not present a danger to human health are unavailable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Consultations with the partners such as the EPA, Uisce Éireann and/or Sligo County Council</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul> |
|                                 | M2: Number of significant adverse effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure  | M2: No significant adverse effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure  |  |
|                                 | M3: Preparation and implementation of construction and environmental management plans  | M3: For construction and environmental management plans to be prepared and implemented for relevant projects  |  |
| <b>Cultural Heritage</b>        | CH1: Percentage of entries to the Record of Monuments and Places protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan  | CH1: No unauthorised adverse effects on archaeological heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>   |
|                                 | CH2: Percentage of entries to the Records of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and their context protected from significant adverse effects arising from the Plan                                  | CH2: No unauthorised adverse effects on architectural heritage resulting from implementation of the Plan  |  |
| <b>Landscape</b>                | L1: Number of unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans              | L1: No unmitigated conflicts with the appropriate protection of statutory designations relating to the landscape, including those included in the Development Plans and other statutory land-use plans  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation demonstrating compliance with "Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management"</li> <li>• Lower tier environmental assessment and decision making by local authorities</li> <li>• SEA Monitoring Programme reports for the land use plans of relevant local authorities (as required, monitoring reports published on various timescales and frequencies)</li> <li>• Input from any other existing or replacement Fáilte Ireland monitoring programmes</li> </ul>   |